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**Strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the Asia-Pacific region**

# Progress with regard to the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

**Note by the secretariat**

*Summary*

Paragraph 39 of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific indicates that reviews of progress on implementation of the regional road map will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. The review has been finalized for the period from April 2017 to March 2018 and is presented for the consideration of member States at the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development. Highlights of the progress made include the establishment of a rapid response facility to provide quick and effective response to countries in respect of different thematic areas and priority issues of the road map.

## I. Introduction

1. Asia and the Pacific was the first region to develop a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It was adopted at the Fourth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development in March 2017, and endorsed through resolution 73/9 of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

2. The objective of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific is to promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development through regional cooperation in a set of priority and thematic areas, identified through consultations with member States.

3. Paragraph 39 of the regional road map indicates that reviews of progress on its implementation will take place annually at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, with reference to the globally agreed Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework. The review has been finalized for the

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period from April 2017 to March 2018 without creating additional reporting requirements for member States and within existing resources.

## II. The foundation for support to member States

4. Following the guidance provided by the regional road map, the priority areas of cooperation identified in the road map are being facilitated through the conference structure of the Commission, existing expertise within the context of the subprogrammes covered by ESCAP, the regional institutes, strengthened institutional partnerships within and outside of the United Nations system, the thematic working groups of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism,[1] and strengthened engagement of the secretariat with various stakeholders.

5. ESCAP established a rapid response facility to provide quick and effective response to countries in support of the different thematic areas and priority issues of the road map. In 2017, missions were deployed to 10 countries in Asia and the Pacific.

6. Missions at the national level are coordinated closely with the United Nations resident coordinators and implemented in the context of the work of the United Nations country team. Technical support is being provided in the areas of integrated analysis, data and statistics, and stakeholder engagement planning, as well as related regional support to address systemic and capacity challenges to institutionalizing effective stakeholder engagement as an important aspect of more effective governance, identified as an issue of concern in the road map.[2]

7. On the invitation by the Resident Coordinator of Bhutan, the secretariat, within the rapid response facility, is advising the United Nations country team and the Government of Bhutan on strengthening national statistical systems for the provision of evidence for decision-making, including for the formulation and monitoring of development policies. The advice is being provided in the context of the development of the United Nations sustainable development policy framework for the period 2019–2023. While the framework has yet to be finalized, deliberations with Government and non-government stakeholders of Bhutan as well as several United Nations agencies has confirmed the necessity of including data for evidence-based policy- and decision-making as a strategic priority area in the framework. Further, support to the country team and the National Statistics Bureau of Bhutan in terms of statistics policy,

[1] The Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism comprises 31 United Nations and affiliated entities, including the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank. The Mechanism was restructured in line with relevant clusters of the Sustainable Development Goals in 2016, revised terms of reference were adopted and workplans developed. The thematic working groups are on the following areas: (a) statistics; (b) resource-efficient growth; (c) sustainable societies; (d) inclusive development, including poverty eradication; (e) disaster risk reduction and resilience; (f) gender equality and empowerment of women; and (g) education for all.

[2] A partnership with the International Association for Public Participation, a global organization, is being formalized to provide specialized support to member States on engagement for the 2030 Agenda. A workshop held in Bangkok resulted in the identification of the challenges and barriers to multi-stakeholder engagement for the 2030 Agenda and the development of a preliminary set of indicators of quality engagement. This indicator set is being used to support planning and assessment efforts at the national level.

quality assurance and inter-agency coordination has been identified as a key, longer-term engagement pillar for ESCAP within the rapid response facility.

8. The Government of Mongolia, with the support of the rapid response facility, has strengthened its capacity to develop integrated policies with data support through a national consultation process. The rapid diagnostic tool on statistical data was instrumental in the development of the Sustainable Development Goals baseline progress to date and allowed comparison of perception-based rapid impact assessment with data on progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. The work in Mongolia resulted in enhanced engagement across sectors and the United Nations country team on collaboration for setting priorities, reporting and benchmarking with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals. The immediate output was that this approach was incorporated into the Sustainability Outlook for Mongolia document. Data gaps in environment statistics were also identified and will be addressed in future missions.

9. The Ministry of Planning, Development and Reform of Pakistan has made positive strides in developing an integrated implementation strategy for the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals with technical assistance provided through the ESCAP rapid response facility. ESCAP will provide further capacity development support for integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning and for developing the national environmental accounts that will facilitate strategic prioritization and impact investments. In addition, the work conducted under the rapid response facility resulted in an enrichment of the approach used in the Ministry to assess Sustainable Development Goal priorities and interlinkages as well as to benchmark progress. Data gaps were also identified in environment statistics and these will be addressed in future missions.

10. The Government of Samoa, with the support of the rapid response facility, has reinforced its leadership in the Pacific region in Sustainable Development Goal planning, follow-up and review by integrating the 2030 Agenda into the national development strategy and monitoring and evaluation. With the leadership of the Ministry of Finance, and with support from the rapid response facility, the country is supporting other islands in the Pacific by sharing best practices and tools on sector planning and budgetary processes for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national planning.

11. Based on requests made by the Government of Cambodia and the Office of the Prime Minister of Timor-Leste, ESCAP provided support in both countries on trade-related issues with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and graduation from the status of least developed country. ESCAP will develop capacity-building programmes on graduation and on concerns following accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) with respect to smooth transition, related to trade and investment.

12. The Governments of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Kiribati and Sri Lanka received support on stakeholder engagement, strengthening the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through participatory processes. This work informed the development and delivery of capacity-building material, as well as the development of a planning and assessment framework for quality engagement.

13. The secretariat is building its own capacity to engage a range of stakeholders. The ESCAP Sustainable Business Network and its task forces have been refocused to align them with the Sustainable Development Goals.

Avenues are being explored for strengthening engagement with the academic and think tank communities. Multi-stakeholder consultations and partnerships have been facilitated, including through existing networks, such as the Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade and the Asia-Pacific Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing Countries.

14. Important guidance on the support offered by the secretariat has been provided by *Asia-Pacific Sustainable Development Goals Outlook* and *Eradicating Poverty and Promoting Prosperity in a Changing Asia-Pacific*, published with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and ADB in the framework of partnership on the Sustainable Development Goals; five subregional reports underlining perspectives on sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific; and subregional meetings preparatory to the Fifth Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

# III. Progress of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

## A. Means of implementation and partnership

### 1. Data and statistics

*Current status*

15. The Asia-Pacific statistical community has developed a collective vision and framework for action, subsequently endorsed by the Committee on Statistics at its fifth session and the Commission at its seventy-third session. ESCAP support for statistics focuses on the five action areas of the collective vision and framework for action,[3] which correspond to the five opportunities for regional cooperation outlined in the road map.

*Progress made*

16. The ESCAP statistical database and Sustainable Development Goal portal provided infrastructure for the production of analytical products to support regional Sustainable Development Goal progress assessment and evaluation of the availability of global Sustainable Development Goal indicators. ESCAP produced diagnostic and assessment tools that assist national statistical systems in the region to identify gaps and opportunities for developing a national data plan. These include a national statistical systems review tool and a policy-data integration tool.

17. ESCAP developed methodologies, guidelines and tools to support national follow-up and review processes. These include the following: an environment statistics diagnostic tool; an inventory template and training materials on the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and the Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics; a framework and guidelines for improving disaster-related statistics; a framework to produce reliable statistics for reporting on the Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific; training materials

[3] The five action areas are as follows: engaging users and investing in statistics; assuring quality and instilling trust in statistics; integrated statistics for integrated analysis; modernizing statistical business processes; and having the requisite skills set.

on the integration of data sources for economic statistics and informal sector statistics, guidelines and a template for producing national vital statistics reports; guidelines on setting up national coordination mechanisms and national strategies for civil registration and vital statistics; a generic tool and guidelines for assessing national and local policies in support of leaving no one behind; and an online data hub.

18. ESCAP engaged in technical cooperation activities for national statistical development under four regional initiatives: (a) economic statistics; (b) environment statistics; (c) civil registration and vital statistics; and (d) population and social statistics. Most member States in the region participated in capacity-building activities in 2017 under at least one of the four initiatives.

19. The Thematic Working Group on Statistics has prioritized coordinated support to member States in national follow-up and review. The initial focus is on developing a set of tools for assessing and visualizing baselines and progress with respect to the Sustainable Development Goals and providing technical support on the application of such tools in selected countries in their voluntary national review processes. This priority was identified through the analysis of an inventory of ongoing and planned statistical capacity development assistance for the Sustainable Development Goals in Asia and the Pacific. In addition, the Thematic Working Group on Statistics worked with the Thematic Working Group on Sustainable Societies and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs of the Secretariat to organize a regional workshop in 2017 on strengthening the collection and use of international migration data in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

20. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 17.18 and 17.19 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 2. Technology

*Current status*

21. Member countries are seeking stronger and alternative means of using science, technology and innovation to build productive capacities and to address pressing social and environmental challenges. Member States are increasingly realizing that frontier technologies and e-commerce offer new opportunities and challenges to address these national problems. Realizing that they need to take ownership and lead or proactively seek domestic and international technology transfer, policymakers, leaders of research institutions and entrepreneurs are seeking means to promote technology transfers from research institutions to firms and internationally.

22. Member countries are seeking to further strengthen their science, technology and innovation infrastructure and capacities through public-private partnerships. Science, technology and innovation parks are one mechanism through which Governments can encourage technology development and innovation activities.

23. There are significant systemic and capacity challenges to support social enterprises and impact investment, such as the need to put in place coherent strategies that support social enterprises and impact investment, the need to build the capacities of social enterprises and impact investors, and the need to ensure that such support results in the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Progress made*

24. The International Conference on Green Technologies for Achieving Sustainable Development Goals provided a platform for policymakers and sector experts to strengthen regional cooperation for the adoption, application and development of green technologies. The workshop organized jointly by ESCAP and the World Intellectual Property Organization on building the innovation and technological capacities of least developed countries in Asia and the Pacific provided policymakers from least developed countries with concrete suggestions on how to support technology transfer domestically and internationally.

25. The Asia-Pacific Declaration on Social Enterprise and Impact Investment of September 2017 established a partnership between ESCAP, the British Council, the Social Enterprise World Forum, the Global Steering Group for Impact Investment, the Global Social Entrepreneurship Network, the Asian Venture Philanthropy Network and the Ākina Foundation in order to build a community of leaders across the Asia-Pacific region with the aim of sharing experience and pooling expertise on the growth of social enterprise and impact investment in support of the 2030 Agenda.

26. The report entitled *Innovative Financing for Development in Asia and the Pacific: Government Policies on Impact Investment and Public Finance for Innovation*, published by ESCAP jointly with the Science and Technology Policy Institute of the Republic of Korea, provided a collection of case studies on promoting inclusive innovation that leaves no one behind and on introducing innovative financing mechanisms to support social enterprises and impact investment, among others. ESCAP published national surveys on the state of social enterprises (Pakistan and the Philippines) and working papers on digital and virtual currencies for sustainable development and on artificial intelligence in Asia and the Pacific.

27. The 2017 Economic Forum of the United Nations Special Programme for the Economies of Central Asia, held in Dushanbe under the theme of innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals in the Programme's region, underscored the importance of technological, economic and institutional innovation to enable the attainment of the Goals. The Forum recommended the development of a regional innovation strategy with a view to (a) realizing regional synergies, and (b) sharing and exchanging innovation practices, initiatives and policies in support of sustainable development.

28. ESCAP and the Asian and Pacific Centre for Transfer of Technology, a specialized regional institute of ESCAP, have pursued several activities in collaboration with other organizations. This has included capacity-building on science, technology and innovation policy and new and emerging technologies in China, India, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Malaysia, the Philippines and Thailand; regional events on nanotechnology for safe and sustainable development and on innovation strategies for sustainable development through the water-energy-food nexus; and an international workshop on science, technology, innovation and management for water sustainability, as well as an international innovation fair and international workshop on supporting innovative entrepreneurs and the role of technology transfer.

29. The online periodicals *Asia-Pacific Tech Monitor* and *Value Added Technology Information Service (VATIS) Update* on biotechnology, food processing, new and renewable energy, ozone layer protection and waste management continued to deliver the latest technological information to member States.

30. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 9.3, 9.5, 17.6, 17.7 and 17.8 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 3. Finance

*Current status*

31. Developing countries in Asia will need to invest $26 trillion in infrastructure between 2016 and 2030 to effectively support the 2030 Agenda, equivalent to approximately 6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) annually, and more than 2 per cent of GDP higher than current investment levels. For least developed, landlocked developing and small island developing countries of the region, such financing needs would be even higher, at roughly 10.5 per cent of GDP. Public resources alone are unlikely to be sufficient to meet this demand. ESCAP is therefore supporting countries in developing appropriate policy and institutional frameworks for public-private partnerships.

32. Small and medium-sized enterprises constitute the largest number of companies in any country and play a fundamental role in the creation of employment, the development of skills and the diffusion of technological knowledge. However, small and medium-sized enterprises often have difficulties in accessing financing from the formal financial system.

*Progress made*

33. A joint policy paper by ESCAP and Oxfam entitled *Taxing for Shared Prosperity: Policy Options for the Asia-Pacific Region* was published, and a book volume on tax policies for sustainable development will be published in early 2018. ESCAP published papers entitled "PPP policy, legal and institutional frameworks in Asia and the Pacific", "Public-private partnerships for cross-border infrastructure development" and "Tapping capital markets and institutional investors for infrastructure development", as well as *Asia-Pacific Countries with Special Needs Development Report 2017: Investing in Infrastructure for an Inclusive and Sustainable Future*, which covers infrastructure financing issues. ESCAP also prepared a working paper entitled "Estimating infrastructure financing needs in Asia-Pacific least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States", and developed country guidance on public-private partnerships for sustainable development that was presented at a regional event in December 2017.

34. The integration of the second meeting of the ESCAP Eminent Expert Group on Tax Policy and Public Expenditure Management for Sustainable Development and the Workshop on Domestic Public Resource Mobilization for Sustainable Development provided an opportunity for representatives from finance ministries and tax authorities to learn from and interact with a group of renowned scholars and experts on public finance. In addition, three subregional and five national studies were prepared to support capacity-building events on infrastructure financing strategies (Georgia, Nepal, the Philippines, Samoa and Viet Nam) and five national workshops took place to discuss the importance of infrastructure financing for sustainable development in 2017 (Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mongolia and Nepal). Workshops, policy dialogues and expert group meetings have been organized on domestic public resource mobilization for sustainable development, tax and public finance, small and medium-sized enterprise finance and infrastructure financing strategies.

35. Strengthened collaboration between ESCAP and ADB, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and Oxfam, on public finance and tax matters, can be reported. ESCAP continues to work with the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre of the International Monetary Fund and, in November 2017, conducted a workshop with the Samoan Ministry of Finance on medium-term expenditure for representatives of finance and planning and central banks, with country presentations on current status and challenges and sharing of good practice.

36. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.1, 8.3, 8.10, 9.3, 10.1 and 17.16 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 4. Policy coherence

*Current status*

37. The 2030 Agenda has set a new standard for synergies across economic development, social policies and services, trade, and natural resources and environmental sustainability, and marks a global commitment to address inequality and overcome global poverty. Although the global agendas complement each other, linkages, intersections and systemic interdependencies are often not made explicit. As a result, countries are confronted with different agendas that are hard to translate into local action.

38. There is increasing awareness of the need to continue to foster synergies across economic, social and environmental policy systems in countries, and to identify trade-offs and reconcile domestic policy objectives with internationally agreed objectives. Coherence also needs to be addressed between the diverse action of multiple actors and stakeholders (Governments, international and regional organizations, civil society organizations and the private sector) as well as between different sources of finance (public, private, international and domestic). There is increasing awareness of the need and potential for evidence-based policies.

*Progress made*

39. The ESCAP methodological tool on *Integrated Approaches for Sustainable Development Goals Planning: The Case of Goal 6 on Water and Sanitation* was published.

40. ESCAP supported the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals with the means of implementation of the New Urban Agenda under a new partnership with the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), focusing on providing policy assistance in the areas of financing, data and partnerships with non-State actors. ESCAP co-chaired the United Nations Development Group Asia-Pacific Task Team on Urbanization, which promotes policy coherence on urban issues at both the regional and the country levels among 20 member agencies.

41. ESCAP and UN-Habitat collaborated to support policy coherence in mainstreaming climate change responses, including the nationally determined contribution priorities of selected countries in the region, into current and forthcoming national urban policies.

42. The Asia-Pacific Research and Training Network on Trade Expert Group on Trade and the Sustainable Development Goals was established and nodal points as well as capacity-building needs were identified for Bangladesh,

Bhutan, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Nepal. Policy advice was also provided to Afghanistan on trade and the Sustainable Development Goals.

43. ESCAP published *Asia-Pacific Trade and Investment Report 2017: Channelling Trade and Investment into Sustainable Development*, which focused on the means of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. A handbook on policies, promotion and facilitation of FDI for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific was published in October 2017. Good practice case studies, tools for evidence-based policymaking and the negotiation of agreements for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, and publications relating to the negotiation of development-oriented preferential trade agreements, intellectual property rights and non-tariff barriers were issued, and online training materials were developed as contributions to existing courses.

44. Workshops and training on FDI promotion and facilitation were held in Myanmar and Uzbekistan. The annual meeting and capacity-building events were organized for the Asia-Pacific FDI Network for Least Developed and Landlocked Developing States, at which the linkages between FDI, innovation and the Sustainable Development Goals were also discussed. Regional and national workshops were organized on trade agreements with respect to graduation from least developed country status, and trade policies for sustainable development.

45. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.1, 8.3, 8.10, 9.3, 10.1 and 17.16 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 5. North-South, South-South, international and regional partnerships

*Current status*

46. Comprehensive implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires partnerships and the deployment of new solutions between countries and across subregions. Countries in the Asia-Pacific region could benefit from North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation, and from the sharing of good practices and home-grown approaches.

47. There is increasing awareness of the key role that multi-stakeholder partnerships will play in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The effectiveness of multi-stakeholder partnerships, while dependent on many factors, will be increasingly tied to their ability to manage and share knowledge and expertise about the issues, processes and solutions that they are promoting.

*Progress made*

48. Guidelines on the development of multi-stakeholder partnerships were developed in coordination with the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability. The guidelines provide practical guidance for ESCAP member States, policymakers and practitioners on building and sustaining successful multi-stakeholder partnerships aimed at supporting the progress of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals.

49. A workshop was organized jointly by ESCAP and the United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability with the aim of introducing, validating and complementing the issues identified in the

guidelines and other elements related to the process of implementing successful multi-stakeholder partnerships in the region.

50. A new partnership with UN-Habitat convened over 70 stakeholders from 17 Asia-Pacific countries in Bangkok for a regional partners forum. This event served as an expert group meeting to discuss stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the outcomes of the New Urban Agenda and the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals. Consensus developed over the need for a specific review and study paper on issues of municipal finance to support stakeholder implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda at the local level. The event was planned as part of a continuous dialogue with partners leading to the World Urban Forum in February 2018, and the first global report on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda to the Economic and Social Council is expected in 2018.

51. ESCAP has worked to support multi-stakeholder partnerships to upgrade regional transport infrastructure and facilities and increase the number of ESCAP member States that are signatories or parties to global, regional and subregional transport-related agreements.

52. ESCAP and the ASEAN secretariat jointly launched a report entitled *Complementarities between the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: A Framework for Action*.

53. ESCAP and subregional organizations such as ASEAN and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat are successfully cooperating on implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and in synergy with subregional road maps, visions and plans of actions. For example, the relevant priorities of the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific have been mainstreamed into the Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development, developed with the substantive and financial support of ESCAP. The Pacific Road Map for Sustainable Development was endorsed by the Pacific Islands Forum leaders in September 2017 and will guide and consolidate the Pacific's efforts to implement and monitor the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, the SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action (SAMOA) Pathway and the Framework for Pacific Regionalism, with ESCAP playing a significant role in supporting efforts for follow-up and review.

54. The outputs reported have supported progress towards target 17.7 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## B. Thematic issues

### 1. Leaving no one behind (social development)

*Current status*

55. Despite high and enduring economic growth and significant progress in terms of poverty eradication, inequality persists in the Asia-Pacific region and in some instances has intensified. Growing disparities in income and wealth, as well as in inequality of opportunity, disproportionately affect women and vulnerable groups. These barriers require transformative measures to achieve the 2030 Agenda.

56. There is increasing awareness of the need for data, information and analysis of the challenges facing countries in the region, and that

evidence-based policy recommendations, country good practices, stakeholder engagement and regional cooperation can increase the capacity of member States to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

*Progress made*

57. ESCAP launched the flagship publication entitled *Sustainable Social Development in Asia and the Pacific: Towards a People-Centred Transformation*, which contains a summary of the social development gaps in the region and an outline of the key priorities and resources needed for a people-centred transformation. ESCAP also organized the Strategic Dialogue on Poverty and Inequality in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok to identify the challenges faced by the region in measuring and addressing poverty and inequality and sharing good practices.

58. ESCAP published a policy paper series on inequality of opportunity, with four papers measuring inequality of access to education, employment, clean energy and health. The policy papers are accompanied by a guide on how to measure inequality of opportunity. A study on multidimensional inequality in Indonesia was prepared and discussed at the Indonesia Development Forum 2017. The study reviewed progress in key opportunities and highlighted persisting rural-urban disparities and an increasing gap in educational attainment between the richest and poorest quintiles.

59. As a part of its efforts to promote women's empowerment through entrepreneurship, ESCAP prepared a study entitled *Fostering Women's Entrepreneurship in ASEAN: Transforming Prospects, Transforming Societies*.

60. ESCAP organized a regional forum on gender-responsive budgeting in Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok, resulting in increased momentum in the advocacy of the importance of gender-responsive budgeting and enhanced dialogue and partnerships around sustainable financing for achieving gender equality and the 2030 Agenda.

61. ESCAP prepared a report entitled *Realizing Youth Inclusion for a More Sustainable Asia and the Pacific* to broaden understanding of the multitude of institutional and sociocultural barriers that youth face in realizing their potential, and established a youth policy toolbox as an online repository of good practices and policies to assist Governments in developing policies for harnessing the potential of youth. The toolbox has been launched in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Mongolia, the Philippines and six Pacific island countries. ESCAP also convened an Interregional Youth Policy Forum in Bangkok in cooperation with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia and the Economic Commission for Africa to share good practices across the regions in facilitating the school-to-work transition of youth.

62. To enhance the evidence base for policy options, ESCAP prepared a report entitled *Addressing the Challenges of Population Ageing in Asia and the Pacific: Implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing*, in which it argues that with effective policies, population ageing can herald a period of sustained progress. A special issue of the *Asia-Pacific Population Journal* (vol. 32, No. 1, August 2017) focused on population ageing, covering themes such as human resource requirements for meeting the needs of an ageing society; the availability and use of appropriate technology to enhance access by older persons to services, including health and long-term care services; and gender dimensions of ageing in the Asia-Pacific region. ESCAP convened the Asia-Pacific Intergovernmental Meeting on the Third Review and Appraisal of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing to

accelerate the implementation of the Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing, 2002, in order to foster an inclusive society for all ages.

63. ESCAP organized subregional capacity-building workshops on income security for older persons in the Pacific and in South Asia. The workshops focused on the design of policies for income security for older persons and the importance of providing sustainable systems of income security in ageing societies.

64. ESCAP produced a report entitled *Building Disability-Inclusive Societies in Asia and the Pacific: Assessing Progress of the Incheon Strategy*, a comprehensive regional progress report on the participation of persons with disabilities in development opportunities at the midpoint review of the implementation of the Incheon Strategy. ESCAP convened the High-level Intergovernmental Meeting on the Midpoint Review of the Asian and Pacific Decade of Persons with Disabilities, 2013–2022, in Beijing. The Meeting adopted the Beijing Declaration, including the Action Plan to Accelerate the Implementation of the Incheon Strategy, to foster disability-inclusive development through a comprehensive regional policy action plan involving Governments and other stakeholders over the subsequent five years.

65. ESCAP published a report entitled *Towards Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Challenges and Opportunities*, in which it provides up-to-date information on migration trends, highlights key policy issues with respect to ensuring safe, orderly and regular migration in the Asia-Pacific region and provides recommendations to help guide discussions at the Asia-Pacific Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, which was convened by ESCAP in cooperation with the International Organization for Migration and other United Nations agencies. The Meeting helped the region develop an Asia-Pacific perspective on safe, orderly and regular migration to feed into the global stocktaking meeting on the global compact on migration that was held in Puerto Vallarta, Mexico, from 4 to 6 December 2017. ESCAP also published four studies on the links between international migration and development in North and Central Asia.

66. ESCAP developed a series of online training tools to support policymakers in Asia and the Pacific in their efforts with respect to social protection, youth and disability-inclusive disaster risk reduction.

67. Under the Thematic Working Group on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, joint initiatives have been carried out including research and analysis, intergovernmental consensus-building and stakeholder engagement towards advancing gender equality in the Asia-Pacific region. Specifically, an analytical paper on financing for gender equality in Asia and the Pacific has been developed, which proposes key recommendations to enhance investment in women and girls to meet the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda. The Thematic Working Group has also undertaken joint advocacy efforts, including on prevention of violence against women and children.

68. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.3, 5.1, 5.4, 5.5, 5.a, 5.b, 8.3, 8.5, 8.8, 10.2, 10.3, 10.4, 10.7 and 16.12 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 2. Disaster risk reduction and resilience

*Current status*

69. In the 2017 *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report*, it is underlined that disaster risk is outpacing resilience. Notwithstanding the rapid economic growth and incisive reductions in absolute poverty levels that have come to characterize development progress in the region over the past few decades, critical vulnerabilities are on the rise. There is a clear relationship between the impact of disasters, poverty traps, growing inequality and heightened potential for conflict. The *Report* finds that each disaster leads to a 0.13-point increase in the Gini coefficient.

70. A strong economic and social case has been created for strengthening the regional cooperation mechanism for transboundary flood forecasting and early warning system in the Indus and Ganges-Brahmaputra-Meghna basins.

71. The Strategic Plan 2017–2021 of the ESCAP/World Meteorological Organization Typhoon Committee has been aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030. This alignment serves as a blueprint for maximizing the contribution of other ESCAP-facilitated regional cooperation mechanisms to the implementation of the regional road map.

*Progress made*

72. ESCAP released the 2017 *Asia-Pacific Disaster Report* and conducted outreach activities in four subregions to promote policy reforms to address disaster risks, capacity development and vulnerabilities as part of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Moreover, ongoing research provided the basis for developing regional cooperation mechanisms to address two transboundary risks, namely sand and dust storms and transboundary floods, and to define the service lines of such mechanisms. Regional guidebooks were published on how to integrate disaster risk reduction into related development activities.

73. ESCAP promoted effective regional efforts to strengthen disaster risk assessment of slow-onset transboundary disasters (such as El Niño) in collaboration with the Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism. A "build back better" approach in the aftermath of the 2015–2016 El Niño phenomenon has also been promoted through a joint analytical product with the Thematic Working Group.

74. Within the context of the programme of work of the Asian and Pacific Centre for the Development of Disaster Information Management, South-South cooperation has been facilitated. The capacities of countries to protect cities and world heritage sites from seismic hazards through information- and expertise-sharing was enhanced. In this regard, site visits to Bam, Islamic Republic of Iran, and to Thimphu on seismic microzonation were undertaken, with a follow-up plan of action under development.

75. An expert group meeting was convened to discuss regional cooperation in early warning for transboundary river basin floods, flash floods and landslides in Asia and the Pacific in order to define the regional cooperation mechanism for such hazards.

76. The Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction, at its fifth session, supported the efforts of secretariat to put in place an Asia-Pacific disaster resilience network to promote greater coherence across the implementation of global development frameworks, as well as coordination among members of the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism and its Thematic Working Group on Disaster Risk Reduction and Resilience. The secretariat is taking up its implementation in 2018 with key partners including the Thematic Working Group.

77. The Thematic Working Group has made significant progress in three key areas: (a) advancing coherence in the implementation of disaster risk reduction and resilience across the 2030 Agenda and other internationally agreed frameworks, an important guiding principle of the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030; (b) aligning the work of the United Nations with subregional organizations; and (c) achieving a coherent regional response to the 2015–2016 El Niño phenomenon.[4]

78. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 1.5 and 11.4 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

### 3. Climate change

*Current status*

79. The Asia-Pacific region contributes to half of the world's total greenhouse gas emissions. The newest estimates for the Asia-Pacific region show that growth will be significantly impacted by climate change. Without climate action, GDP in the region could decrease by as much as 3.3 per cent by 2050 and 10 per cent by 2100, relative to the base case. The costs of attaining a 2 degrees Celsius scenario for the region are estimated at approximately 0.1 per cent of GDP annually or 4 per cent by 2050, relative to business as usual. The co-benefits of climate action offset many of the costs of emissions reduction and emerging advanced technologies offer future prospects of lower abatement costs.

*Progress made*

80. A regional network of climate finance practitioners was established to exchange knowledge, good practices and lessons learned. Scoping studies were published for Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, identifying opportunities in the financial sector to support low-carbon climate-resilient investments in climate mitigation and adaptation projects. With support from the national champions networks, tangible action was taken in the beneficiary countries, including a regulation on sustainable finance issued by the financial services authority in Indonesia, green banking guidelines issued by the State Bank of Pakistan, a concept for the development of a climate finance charter in the Philippines and a multi-stakeholder process for the development of a sustainable development financing road map with climate finance elements in Sri Lanka.

81. ESCAP published the report entitled *Finance for Climate Action in Asia and the Pacific: A Regional Action Agenda to Access Debt Capital Markets* and *Responding to the Climate Change Challenge in Asia and the Pacific: Achieving the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)*.

[4] See E/ESCAP/CDR(5)/INF/2 for details.

82. The importance and substance of linkages between climate change and urban development in national-level policy frameworks have been analysed and policy recommendations have been developed that are influencing policymaking in project countries such as the Philippines, Solomon Islands and Sri Lanka.

83. Asia-Pacific Climate Week 2017 was convened jointly with the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) DTU Partnership, UNDP, ADB, the International Emissions Trading Association, the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies and others. It culminated in a regional climate action agenda.

84. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 11.b, 13.2 and 13.b of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

### 4. Management of natural resources

*Current status*

85. Throughout Asia and the Pacific, ecosystems, including on land, in fresh water and in oceans, are under threat owing to pollution, unsustainable management, levels of extraction higher than their carrying capacity, rapid urbanization and climate change. The productivity of the agricultural sector remains lower than other sectors. The region lags behind in terms of material resource efficiency and energy efficiency, and vast disparities are observed between countries. Inequitable access to resources, especially for the most vulnerable — including small holders in developing countries, women and indigenous people — is an impediment to poverty alleviation.

*Progress made*

86. ESCAP has produced analytical papers and reports, including the note by the secretariat entitled "Sustainable management of natural resources in Asia and the Pacific: trends, challenges and opportunities in resource efficiency and policy perspectives" (E/ESCAP/MCED(7)/2), in which it highlights policy pathways to promote resource efficiency, and publications entitled *Analysing Resource Efficiency Transitions in Asia and the Pacific* and *Gender, the Environment and Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific*.

87. A pilot study reviewing the extent to which oceans are integrated into national and subnational plans and policies has been conducted.

88. Through its specialized regional institutes, namely the Centre for Sustainable Agricultural Mechanization and the Centre for Alleviation of Poverty through Sustainable Agriculture, ESCAP worked to promote regional and technical cooperation for sustainable agricultural development, including sustainable agricultural mechanization, by engaging government as well as non-government stakeholders. ESCAP facilitated institutional capacity-building for member States on sustainable agricultural development and sustainable agricultural mechanization, covering both policy formulation and technical skills. ESCAP has co-organized capacity-building and best-practice-sharing events on sustainable agriculture, resilience to climate change, integrated water policies, integrated straw management, conservation and the sustainable use of the oceans, seas and marine resources.

89. Advocacy and outreach on the urban nexus approach was continued at regional and international forums to increase awareness and promote the benefits of integrated resource management in cities.

90. The Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific was co-organized in Bangkok with UNEP in September 2017 and resulted in the adoption of a ministerial declaration with a view to collaborative action to ensure that environment and development agendas are approached in an integrated way, addressing promotion of sustainable management of natural resources, urban planning and spatial development, sustainable agriculture practices and advancement of the green economy to reduce waste and pollution.

91. The normative work of ESCAP resulted in the adoption in principle by participating member States of harmonized regional standards for the testing of three types of agricultural machinery, to align them with the goal of sustainable agricultural development. The normative work also led to the development of an initial set of guidelines to facilitate the creation of a regional database on sustainable agricultural mechanization.

92. The Thematic Working Group on Resource-Efficient Growth finalized the draft of the ASEAN-United Nations Action Plan on Environment and Climate Change (2016–2020), which was later adopted by the ministers of environment of ASEAN in September 2017 at their ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in Brunei Darussalam. An information document on resource efficiency and pollution in Asia and the Pacific was drafted by members of the Thematic Working Group for the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Summit on the Environment. The Thematic Working Group's task team on sustainable urbanization supported the Asia-Pacific Regional Partners Forum "Quito+1" in November 2017 that resulted in a guidance document on implementing the New Urban Agenda in line with the 2030 Agenda in the region.

93. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.1, 2.4, 2.5, 6.3, 6.4, 6.5, 6.a, 6.b, 7.1, 7.a, 7.b, 11.3, 11.6, 11.b, 12.2, 12.b, 14.1, 14.2, 14.3, 14.6 and 15.1 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 5. Connectivity for the 2030 Agenda

*Current status*

94. While the transport sector remains one of the main drivers of economic growth, it is also the second largest producer of carbon dioxide emissions globally. Transport development has not yet optimized the comparative advantages of operational efficiency and integrated multimodal transport from the perspective of road users, freight movement and the three dimensions of sustainable development, namely the social, economic and environmental.

95. Trade costs remain high, particularly among Asia-Pacific countries from different subregions and for countries with special needs. The ESCAP-led Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation in 2017 reveals that countries have made good progress in implementing measures under the WTO Agreement on Trade Facilitation and are moving towards paperless trade. However, they are still finding it difficult to implement electronic exchange and legally recognize trade data and documents across borders, despite the significant reductions in transaction costs and improvements in regulatory compliance that this would bring. The level of



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implementation of inclusive trade facilitation measures that are specifically targeted at small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector and women remains low.

*Progress made*

96. ESCAP published *Transport and Communication Bulletin for Asia and the Pacific: No. 87 – Transport and Sustainable Development Goals*, *Monograph Series on Sustainable and Inclusive Transport: Assessment of Urban Transport Systems*, technical material on regional progress on the United Nations Decade of Action for Road Safety and maps of the integrated intermodal transport network, comprising the Asian Highway network, the Trans-Asian Railway network and the network of dry ports of international importance.

97. ESCAP published *Artificial Intelligence and Broadband Divide: State of ICT connectivity in Asia and the Pacific* to deepen understanding of the digital components of emerging technologies and help identify gaps and possible courses of action.

98. ESCAP updated the Asia-Pacific information superhighway topology in the ASEAN subregion, with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand and Brunei Darussalam focusing on the digital economy while the northern corridor — Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Myanmar and Viet Nam, countries with lower broadband expansion — focuses on connectivity.

99. ESCAP led the development of an integrated intermodal transport framework as a key driver for sustainable development. For the assessment of urban transport systems in cities and countries in this region, ESCAP developed the sustainable urban transport index, which was piloted in four cities (Colombo, Hanoi, Jakarta and Kathmandu). ESCAP provided advisory support for data collection and analysis, as well as a capacity-building workshop for countries and cities of South and South-East Asia.

100. Road safety requires a high-level of predictability of both road infrastructure design standards and traffic regulations. Aiming to create a harmonized driving environment across the region, ESCAP developed a new annex to the Intergovernmental Agreement on the Asian Highway Network to lay down standards for selected road safety facilities.

101. ESCAP, through its regional institute the Asian and Pacific Training Centre for Information and Communication Technology for Development, conducted capacity-building activities in cooperation with national partners from ministries and agencies responsible for information and communications technology (ICT) and civil service training institutes, and developed a new module of the Academy of ICT Essentials for Government Leaders, on data-driven smart Government, to enhance policymakers' and civil servants' understanding of the role of data in supporting evidence-based policymaking and in implementing and monitoring their progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

102. ESCAP published several reports and studies on trade facilitation and connectivity in 2017, including those entitled *Digital Trade Facilitation in Asia and the Pacific* (Studies in Trade, Investment and Innovation, No. 87) and *Trade Facilitation and Better Connectivity for an Inclusive Asia and Pacific*

(joint publication with ADB).[5] It also published reports and an interactive database based on the results of the Global Survey on Trade Facilitation and Paperless Trade Implementation conducted in collaboration with all the other United Nations regional commissions and the United Nations Network of Experts for Paperless Trade and Transport in Asia and the Pacific.[6] Baseline studies for establishing trade and transport facilitation monitoring mechanisms and addressing barriers along subregional corridors in South Asia were completed in Bangladesh, Bhutan and Nepal.

103. ESCAP, together with ADB and the Government of Indonesia, co-hosted the Eighth Asia-Pacific Trade Facilitation Forum, on the theme "Trade facilitation innovations for sustainable development in Asia and the Pacific". ESCAP also organized over a dozen workshops on trade facilitation and paperless trade in 2017. Notable events included a masterclass on digital customs and single windows organized jointly by ESCAP and the World Customs Organization and co-hosted with the Korea Customs Service of the Republic of Korea, and two regional workshops to build the capacity for trade single window interoperability in collaboration with the Eurasian Economic Commission.

104. Five ESCAP countries signed the Framework Agreement on Facilitation of Cross-border Paperless Trade in Asia and the Pacific in 2017. Others indicated intent to join through accession. The Interim Intergovernmental Steering Group on Cross-border Paperless Trade Facilitation, at its third meeting, developed technical and legal readiness self-assessment tools to be used to identify barriers to cross-border paperless trade and develop action plans and pilot projects to be implemented with the support of bilateral and other development partners.

105. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets and means of implementation 1.1, 1.2, 2.3, 2.a, 3.6, 3.9, 4.4, 7.3, 9.1, 9.4, 9.a, 9.c, 11.2, 11.6, 13.1, 16.2, 17.6 and 17.8, of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## 6. Energy

*Current status*

106. Nearly half a billion people in Asia and the Pacific still lack access to electricity. More than 80 per cent of the countries in the region have targets to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable energy in the region. More than assisting in energy supply needs, renewable sources of energy are receiving further impetus from the climate agenda. While the region has emerged as the producer and provider of most of the world's renewable energy technology, the overall trend within the region is diversification of the domestic energy mix, depending on national and subregional context. Given the uneven distribution of energy resources in the Asia-Pacific region and the need for transition of the energy sector towards achieving Sustainable Development Goal 7, there is good scope for coordinated regional action to achieve optimal deployment and utilization of energy resources through enhanced connectivity, economic cooperation and integration.

[5] Manila, 2017. Available from www.adb.org/publications/trade-facilitation-connectivity-inclusive-asia-pacific.

[6] See https://unnext.unescap.org/AP-TFSurvey2017/global.html.

*Progress made*

107. Various activities such as multi-stakeholder dialogues and field projects have been undertaken to enhance the understanding of national government officials and other stakeholders of policy options and strategies for sustainable energy development at both the national and the regional levels, leading to 60 measured references in publications and scientific journals to ESCAP activities and knowledge products in the area of energy and over 10,000 visits to the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal.

108. As an improved knowledge platform for Sustainable Development Goal 7, the Asia-Pacific Energy Portal has become a "one-stop shop" aggregator of open-access energy information and a unique analytical tool for the Asia-Pacific region. It is currently being updated to provide decision makers with the required knowledge platform to contribute to an informed debate about the achievement of this Goal during the review of the Goals at the high-level political forum on sustainable development in New York in 2018.

109. To support the evidence-based review and evaluation of the implementation of Goal 7 for the benefit of member States, a report entitled *A Global Tracking Framework 2017: Regional Assessment Report — Asia-Pacific Progress in* Sustainable *Energy* was developed by ESCAP in cooperation with ADB. In the publication, progress at the regional and country levels is reviewed, the key drivers behind progress are examined and the major challenges to achieving energy access, energy efficiency and renewable energy objectives are identified.

110. Two expert working groups were established, namely the Expert Working Group on Universal Access to Modern Energy Services, Renewable Energy, Energy Efficiency and Cleaner Use of Fossil Fuels, and the Expert Working Group on Energy Connectivity. The establishment of the Committee on Energy and the two expert working groups provided institutional mechanisms to ensure full preparation for the Second Asian and Pacific Energy Forum and enhance continuous engagement with member States to implement the ESCAP programme of work on energy.

111. ESCAP organized a high-level policy dialogue on Sustainable Development Goal 7, a ministerial round table on regional cooperation for sustainable energy, focused events at Expo 2017 and the Eighth International Forum on Energy for Sustainable Development.

112. The outputs reported have supported progress towards targets 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 of the Sustainable Development Goal indicator framework.

## IV. Matters calling for the attention of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

113. Member States may wish to take note of the progress on implementation of the regional road map and suggest modalities to strengthen its application in Asia and the Pacific.

114. Member States may wish to provide recommendations on how future reports on progress on implementation of the regional road map could incorporate national-level experience.